September 13, 1967 L-17001

Mr. Peter Shepherd
Trade Division
J. B. Lippincott Company
521 Fifth Avenue
New York, New York 10017

Dear Mr. Shepherd:

I have finally arrived in Santa Monica, after leaving Saigon in June and consulting in Europe and Washington. I apologize for the delay in answering your letter of July 27. It has been awaiting me here.

Your reaction to my class notes is, of course, the most flattering kind of response. I am pleased by your suggestions, but since I am still engaged full-time in consultations dealing with Vietnam -- although I am now with The RAND Corporation rather than the State Department -- I don't yet feel free to write much publicly about my experiences or conclusions concerning Vietnam. It's not so much, at this point, a matter of propriety as of continued access and influences. My style within government channels has been one of extreme frankness; and since the attitudes I am expressing frankly are both critical and pessimistic, they are just barely acceptable so long as I play the game and restrict them to official circles. I am willing to do that so long as I feel I am getting a serious hearing and may possibly, eventually, have some influence. That could change.

I haven't seen the class report myself; I suppose it's rocketing back and forth between Saigon, various addresses in Europe, and Santa Monica. Not having seen the printed version of my comments, I have only a vague memory of what I put down in my fevered condition, and I'm left with a rather uneasy feeling on the tone I may have conveyed. I was certainly in an unwonted mood, lying on my back in Bangkok and reflecting on the course of the last five or ten years of my life. However, I am reassured by your own reaction. I had hoped to attend the class reunion, but as things

worked out I find that I'm still feeling much more like a member of the class of '22; I hope that this is the effects of the hepatitis, and not simply what it feels like to be thirty-six.

Thank you very much for Bernard Fall's book, which I had heard about in Vietnam and was looking forward to reading. I knew Fall, and liked him. I talked to him in Saigon just a week before he was killed. As a matter of fact, a week later, I found myself in the very same area where he was killed, arranging with the Marines to go out on patrol with a Combined Action squad (a mixed squad of U.S. Marines and Popular Force Soldiers). At about nine o'clock at night we were loaded up just about to move out when a phone call came in from the Marine division head quarters, withdrawing their agreement to my accompanying the patrol; they had gotten so much criticism and red tape in connection with Fall's death a week earlier that they had decided to clamp down on the presence of civilians with their combat units. The next day I went south of Da Nang and found a different Marine unit that hadn't gotten the word. (By coincidence, the CAC unit with which I ended up going out on an all night patrol and ambush was the one recently written up in a cover story in LIFE.)

I look forward to reading the book; let me congratulate you on its general appearance.

Sincerely yours,

Daniel Ellsberg

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